

Gardening with Chuck Programs for April 1 - 7, 2019

Seasonal Allergy Season

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. About a week ago I found myself getting itchy eyes and a little more sneezing than normal. Yup, it's the start of seasonal allergy season. Elms, maples, and willows have all been blooming for about ten days now and cedars aren't too far behind. If you also suffer from seasonal allergies, I feel your pain. But one thing to keep in mind is that the plants with the bright showy flowers aren't usually the culprits. They have those bright flowers to attract bees to pollinate them. Their pollen isn't easily spread by wind. The plants that cause us the most discomfort, both now and later in the summer, are the ones with flowers you never see. These plants have pollen easily distributed by the wind to land in our sinuses. All you can do is take your allergy meds and hope for rainy cloudy weather to keep the pollen settled down! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Frost Heaving

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. There is a phenomenon known in soils as frost heaving. The freezing and thawing action of saturated soils, especially clay soils, can essentially lift poorly rooted plants up several inches in the ground. It's the same thing that makes pot holes so bad in winter. Fortunately we don't have the right conditions that we see it very often around here, but this year I've seen more of it than I have ever seen before. Likely this is because it was far wetter than normal and colder than normal for a long time. I had garlic cloves planted last fall that were totally lifted out of the ground that I had to reset and hope that they live. There's no real way to prevent it, but we don't have it happen often enough to really worry. If you find plants, especially late planted perennials, that were heaved, just carefully reset them ASAP. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Early April Gardening

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. It's April, finally, thank goodness. But it's still too wet to be doing much soil work. Yes, I planted peas last week, but it was only a half row and it was a muddy mess! As the soil dries grab opportunities to get those cool season crops planted. Last week I mentioned peas and potatoes for the first 3 weeks of April. Other plants that you can get seeded or transplanted in April, again as the soil conditions permit, include beets, cabbage, collards, chard, carrots, broccoli, endive, cauliflower, lettuce, radishes, onions - plants or sets, spinach and turnips. Lettuce you can plant clear into the second week of May. Towards the very end of the month, as in the last five days, you can plant sweet corn if it has warmed up enough. Melons can be planted starting the last week of April, but too early for tomatoes in April! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Read Your Crabgrass Preventer Label

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. You can start getting your crabgrass preventer applied any day now, but be sure to pay close attention to the label directions. The directions will tell you what spreader settings to use if you are using a granular product. They'll tell you whether it needs to be watered in or not, whether to apply to a damp lawn or a dry lawn. But the most important piece of information on that label will tell you if and when you need to reapply for season long control. There are many different herbicides in those products and some last much longer than others. Often, a product will say four months of control, but to control all the weeds you need to make a second application after 6 to 8 weeks to get you all the way through the season. Yes, that printing on the label is small, but it is very important that you read it all! I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.

Compost pH

This is Gardening with Chuck. I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent. There are so many things we could be talking about to be doing in the yard and garden this time of year, but the weather just won't let us so let's talk about compost and specifically compost pH. We've long held the notion that anything high in organic matter will create acid conditions as it decomposes. What we have found out, especially when growing plants sensitive to pH, is that we need to not assume anything and check the pH regularly. When one researcher checked various types of compost they found pH levels ranging from a low of 5.4 with composted bark, to a high of 8.0 for dairy solids. In fact, most of the material was neutral or alkaline in soil pH. Horse manure was slightly acid at 6.4 pH, leaf litter was neutral at 7.2 but yard debris and mixed manure were both in the high 7s. I'm Chuck Otte and this has been Gardening with Chuck.